

# What Makes a Good Seed Rep?

It's said that people do business with people, not companies.

This raises the question, "What qualities or behaviors are needed to be a good seed sales rep?" In considering comments and insights from farmers, suppliers and seed reps, we found a few common themes. Nothing too surprising for a seasoned seed professional, but perhaps a few good reminders and tips for younger folks just getting into the business.

## 1. Honesty

When talking with farmers, you want to highlight product attributes, but also be forthright about any shortcomings. Let potential customers know what will or won't work for their acres, soil type or challenges. While praising what your products can do, don't bother comparing your options to the competition – a farmer will be doing that on their own. Focus instead on what your company can offer. Be up front about costs, but be sure to explain what farmers get for their dollars, including your service and expertise.

Perhaps most importantly, be honest if you don't have the answer to a question or concern. Tell a farmer you'll look into it, then find the answer and follow up.

## 2. Good communication

Communication is important when building a customer relationship. Many farmers will appreciate a heads up before you show up at their farm, so try different forms of communication – email, phone call, text message – to reach out. It's important to build a connection with potential customers, so be an active listener. Ask questions and seek more information to understand a farmer's operation and its challenges. Clarify concerns and be ready to offer solutions. Make sure this communication extends to an after-sale follow-up. Remember: It's easier to retain an existing customer than make a new one. It's worth the investment

of time to get to know potential and existing customers. And don't forget about getting to know their families and employees as well.

## 3. Problem-solving skills

The ag industry is full of challenges, including environmental and agronomic factors, so a seed rep needs to be prepared to address various issues and help farmers find solutions. Being a creative thinker and problem solver willing to suggest new approaches will be important to helping farmers manage their challenges. A good seed rep becomes a trusted resource for their customers. And to ensure you bring value to the customer before and after the sale, check in regularly to find out how your suggested solutions are working.

## 4. Industry knowledge

Farmers expect you to be an expert on your products and all their features. But the best seed reps also have an in-depth understanding of the farming industry – from emerging threats and how they might affect yields to trends in seed and crop protection products that could benefit growers in the future. Know performance data for your area and your products and be prepared to share it. Keep up to speed on weather and climate threats and how to prepare for them. Follow agricultural experts to spot trends in sustainability and seed and product development and share how this information could benefit farmers in the future. A commitment to continuously learning and growing knowledge will help you provide the best, most informed solution for customers.

Choosing a seed sales rep can still come down to chemistry between the rep and the farmer. However, by ensuring that your team members build the attributes farmers are looking for, you can increase the likelihood that one of your reps is the right fit for their farm.

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